

# DIVERSITY IN THE GEOSCIENCES



**Position Summary.** The Geological Society of America (GSA) is committed to promoting a diverse scientific body and diversity of scientific ideas and the connections among them.

This position statement (1) summarizes the consensus view of GSA regarding the Society's commitment to diversity among GSA membership and to Earth literacy for all people; (2) provides information that is intended to raise awareness among geoscience professionals implementing those policies and evaluating the short-and long-term consequences; and (3) encourages geoscientists to participate in implementing suitable diversity practices at local, regional, state, and national levels.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

GSA is committed to making Earth literacy available to all people and to having geoscience professionals, including its membership, reflect the diversity of society. Diversity in the geosciences can be achieved through leadership and membership that models, advocates for, and practices equity and inclusion.

This GSA Position Statement challenges the GSA leadership and membership to actively engage on and productively work to resolve the complexity of issues related to diversity within GSA and in their home institutions, whether they are academic, governmental, non-profit, or industry.

Implementation of the recommendations below is a major element in achieving the goals of this Position Statement:

- **Current Status**—There is a lack of quantitative and qualitative understanding of the current status of diversity-related issues and conditions in and associated with GSA. This should be addressed by GSA in a structured, timely, and ongoing manner.
- **Corrective Actions**—GSA should be committed to addressing organizational gaps or deficiencies identified in the status analysis. This includes specific actions that individual GSA members or GSA as an organization are encouraged to take.
- **Assessment**—GSA should define a benchmark that measures its diversity. Commonly used demographic parameters are a starting point, but this effort calls for broader sociological and ethical measures that align with the objectives posed and that utilize the specialized expertise needed to achieve the assessment.
- **Dissemination**—Implementation includes GSA's commitment to establishing and engaging a plan for disseminating the GSA position on diversity throughout the membership and for promoting increased communication and increased advocacy to support the actions of members to achieve the goals posed by the Position Statement.

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## RATIONALE

The diversity found among humans collectively speaks to a richness of resources, perspectives, and experience. A diverse membership (or workforce) is more capable, insightful, responsive, and dynamic than one that offers very little variety. Diversity today generally refers to variety in race, ethnicity, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, creed, religion, age, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, veteran status, marital status, medical condition, pregnancy, education, class, political affiliation, or parental status.

GSA should enhance its diversity—philosophically and operationally—thereby maximizing the benefit to society. Cultural variety supports diverse points of view and diverse positions on issues. Awareness of and respect for these issues is important in achieving solutions to problems that work well for all who are affected by them. It is through amalgamation of individual perspectives and diverse backgrounds and cultures coupled with higher-order thinking skills that issues can be identified and the full range of possible solutions to problems can be considered.

The GSA community is dedicated to maintaining an organizational climate where diverse scientific ideas are welcomed in an open forum for discussion and exploration by geoscience professionals of varied personal backgrounds, reflecting differences in culture and origin. GSA must vigorously and proactively reject prejudice and stereotyping wherever it is encountered in our profession, while actively promoting a diverse workforce, now and in the future. Diverse perspectives are important and necessary for responsible, effective, decision making and leadership. Other benefits of a diverse profession include increased options in attracting the best and brightest minds into the field and communicating with and educating the public (“Earth literacy”).

## PUBLIC POLICY ASPECTS OF DIVERSITY AND DERIVED BENEFITS

Mutual respect is key to a successful diversity policy. Although an effort to attain diversity may be well-intentioned, groups might “allow” participation but still ignore certain members (or worse, be disrespectful to them directly or about them to others). Respect is needed before participation and progress for true inclusion can occur.

One key benefit of diversity is the opportunity posed by a rich cultural mixture, along with the idea that no single “right way” exists to do things. Openness to wide-ranging ideas and pathways to progress is the lifeline of science. Who can know the origin of an idea? What nuances of a person’s upbringing, cultural milieu, education, social interactions, and ethnicity can lead to an advancement of human knowledge?

The geosciences have an important service function, and the ability of GSA to serve will be enhanced through the active, engaged participation of a diverse membership. Further, as more diverse populations in society become more engaged in the earth sciences, and as their knowledge and appreciation increases, they will be more empowered to make sound choices regarding Earth issues.

*Adopted June 2010; revised April 2013, May 2016, and May 2021*

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## ABOUT THE GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA

The Geological Society of America (<https://www.geosociety.org>) is a scientific society with members from academia, government, and industry in more than 100 countries. Through its meetings, publications, and programs, GSA enhances the professional growth of its members and promotes the geosciences in the service of humankind. GSA encourages cooperative research among earth, life, planetary, and social scientists, fosters public dialogue on geoscience issues, and supports all levels of earth-science education. Inquiries about GSA or this position statement should be directed to GSA’s Director for Geoscience Policy, Kasey S. White, at +1-202-669-0466 or [kwhite@geosociety.org](mailto:kwhite@geosociety.org).

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR GSA AND ITS MEMBERS TO HELP IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

To facilitate implementation of the goals of this Position Statement, GSA recommends the following actions to increase the involvement of geoscientists in local, regional, statewide, and federal diversity policy decisions:

- Seek opportunities to communicate effectively the value of a diverse workforce and of implementing suitable diversity practices to all levels of government, to private industry, and to academia. GSA members are encouraged to work with the media in addressing critical diversity issues. Members who participate in diversity issues are encouraged to share their experiences at GSA meetings. If possible, it is beneficial to provide local examples where efforts to promote a diverse workforce or implement diversity practices have been successful.
- Seek opportunities to communicate effectively the value of a diverse workforce and of implementing suitable diversity practices to community groups. The public must be able to respond in an informed manner to diversity decision making that potentially can have detrimental effects; thus, a growing need exists for the public to be educated about the value of diversity.
- Participate in professional forums and town hall meetings for open community discussions on the importance of a diverse workforce and of implementing suitable diversity practices.
- Provide readily accessible print, web, and personnel resources to members that support geoscientists' communications with decision makers regarding the value of a diverse workforce and of implementing suitable diversity practices. Considerable expertise and resources are available to members through GSA's Geology and Public Policy Committee (GPPC) and GSA's Geology and Society Division. GSA expertise can help members participate in diversity policy decisions by creating talking points on common diversity problems and by providing examples of how they can participate in diversity decisions by becoming members of relevant decision-making bodies.
- Identify legislation that affects diversity and alert the GPPC, Geology and Society Division, and GSA's Associated Societies if action by the GSA membership and affiliated organizations can help improve the rational basis for diversity decisions. The GPPC, Geology and Society Division, and Director of Geoscience Policy, working with GSA members, can also bring this Position Statement to the attention of lawmakers when legislation affects diversity.
- Raise awareness of diversity issues by publishing articles on the links between diversity and geoscience planning and management decisions.
- Draw upon the rich diversity of GSA and the earth-science community as a resource for individuals when selecting organizing committees, invited speakers, and nominees for offices and special prizes.